



Skipping steps in African telecom

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The digital age has most definitely arrived in Africa. The telecom industry is deploying world-class solutions that leapfrog the learning curve of the Western world, implementing global best-practice solutions from the outset. Moshe Peterfreund of FTS shares his thoughts on new developments in the telecom industry.



Mobile communication is and will be a major force in the development of Africa; and as the market develops, deprived communities will greatly benefit from the variety of new services available to them. These currently include SMS based services such as arranging money transfers, or even receiving health related information, with newer services being introduced daily.

However, the communications revolution in Africa is not limited to the wireless sector, and also transcends the national fixed line market. The low availability of phone lines in some areas and countries has led to rapid growth in the use of the internet and email, as businesses choose to communicate via email to surpass the gap in service accessibility. Wire line also remains part of the communications backbone and will continue in that role for some time, with fixed line operators offering the best way to access data at high speeds and carry data at a high capacity.

For instance: In selecting to implement FTS's billing system, and in approaching FTS with highly technical specifications, operators such as Camtel in Cameroon are clearly aware of their potential in today's communications environment, and keen to maximize this potential. Camtel like many other African fixed line operators has a monopoly thus the potential for growth is massive. With a population of over 16 million people, the current 150,000 lines in use represent less than 1% penetration.

The growth in e-commerce in Africa is cultivating the demand for advanced wireline telecommunications. Camtel recognizes this and has invested in optic fiber connections particularly between the major cities within the country.

The use of the Internet is also rapidly growing and with it the demand for reliable broadband services. This is creating a great opportunity for Camtel to capitalize on its leading role in providing data access.

Simultaneously, competition between mobile operators in Africa has become very intense. Operators are judged on performance and performance depends on modernization.

As an organization that works closely with African operators, FTS is looking into those changes with the goal of best equipping service providers to respond to their new challenges. FTS, a global leader of CRM and Billing solutions, sees the continent as a great prospect for telecommunications advancement.

Flexible applications are crucial in order to ensure that operators can roll out their services in a timely and efficient manner; interfacing to multiple networks, including wireline and wireless, supporting prepaid and post paid subscribers and providing multiple and advanced services within a short timeframe.

In Africa, FTS takes a long-term commitment to its clients which greatly reduce implementation risk factors. FTS builds and supports relationships with its clients and believes in adopting a skills transfer approach. This means that once a system has been deployed, the operator's employees are trained to manage the maintenance of the system. In this way the skills can be deployed and then kept locally, while at all times the operator can utilize expertise from FTS or from its local partners.

Recognizing the potential in Africa [FTS](#) has setup local African offices, support teams and regional training programs, to support long term relationships which will benefit not only the operators but indeed the people of Africa as well.